

## SHORT HISTORY AND RATIONALE FOR REVISED ETHICS GUIDELINES

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In 1999, the International Society for Environmental Epidemiology (ISEE) adopted its Ethics Guidelines. Guidelines articulate our professional collective values and the principles according to which we are held both professionally and publicly accountable. They provide a basis for deciding actions in both our research and practice realms. Finally, they provide insight to students to help in their socialization as professional environmental epidemiologists.

Because social values, technological advancements, and legal contexts within which environmental epidemiologists work change over time, a subcommittee was formed at the 2009 annual ISEE conference to review and update our 1996 Guidelines. Its goals were, among others, to (a) include current ethical and philosophical challenges; (b) re-craft recommendations for professional conduct; and (c) provide case studies to enhance the relevance of the Guidelines and stimulate discussion about solutions.

The subcommittee has been working on the revision over the past two years. The process involved a core writing group which expanded halfway into the project. Once agreement was reached by the slightly enlarged writing group, the broader Ethics and Philosophy Committee was invited to provide critique.

The current draft is now being brought to all ISEE members to solicit feedback. In the process, we are expecting more environmental epidemiologists to become aware not only of the guidelines, but also of their content. Through the recent ISEE-member survey, many members are not aware of the Guidelines despite the critical need for principles to avoid unethical practice in our discipline.

The Guidelines apply to all conducting and applying environmental epidemiology research, including individual researchers, institutions, private sponsors, and governmental agencies. Through these guidelines, the ISEE seeks to ensure the highest possible standard of transparent and accountable ethical practice, not only for those environmental epidemiologists in research, but also for those in public health practice.